

astir, and return here, where I shall spend the most of my time until Thursday night."

"All right. I will be on hand in the morning. You better take care not to get into a rumpus, if you go back to Jackpot, for some one may give you a dig in the ribs, and that would knock your plans in the head."

Promising to be watchful, Bristol remounted his horse and galloped back toward Echo Canyon, which he reached shortly after nightfall, no one apparently suspecting that he had been out of the camp.

CHAPTER XII.

A LITTLE GAME THAT DIDN'T WORK.

LEAVING his horse with the other horses at the mouth of the Pass, Dick made his way on foot into the camp, and arrived at the Jackpot Inn in time for supper, of which repast he partook heartily.

After supper he sauntered out on the piazza, where he seated himself to enjoy the moonlight and a cigar.

"Let me see!" he mused. "I believe I was to meet Miss Pearl Prince in the grove to-night, and receive an introduction to her alleged husband. I reckon, however, that it will be hardly necessary, after what I have learned."

So his siesta was not broken.

There was little to do now, he told himself, but to await the arrival of Tuesday night, when the culminating incidents of his visit to Jackpot City would in all probability take place.

As he sat smoking his cigar, he noticed a roughly dressed, red-whiskered man, who paced to and fro in front of the hotel at regular intervals—a personage whom the detective was sure he had never seen before.

Perhaps his attention would not have been attracted to the individual at all, had not he so persistently continued his tramp in front of the hotel.

"I wonder who the fellow is?" Dick mused. "He acts like a stranger, for no one appears to know him. There's something about his dress and his movements, however, that gives rise to a suspicion that he may not be exactly what he seems."

When he had finished his cigar, Dick, out of curiosity, went in and consulted the little book which the General used as a register, and found inscribed therein in a scrawling style of chirography the by no means aristocratic cognomen,

"IKE DAVIS, PRESCOTT, A. T."

"Got a new arrival, eh?" Dick remarked to the General, who, in the absence of paying customers, was regaling himself with a cocktail.

"Yas. A chap wi' red whiskers," the General assented. "Another convert, I reckon." As Dick was about turning away, a boy entered the room and touched him on the arm.

"Some one wants to see you!" was the announcement.

"Some one wants to see me?" echoed Dick.

"Who is it?"

"Miss Prince."

"Which Miss Prince?"

"The man's gal what is shet up!" was the lucid explanation.

"Miss Nellie!" thought Dick. "I wonder what she can want of me? Where is she, boy?"

"Down by the crush-mill. Come! I'll show you!"

Dick glanced at his watch, and found that it was after ten o'clock.

"Perhaps the girl has got back from her visit to her father, and has something to tell me!" he mused.

So, bidding the urchin lead the way he left the hotel.

The boy kept trotting along ahead, until they were close to the mill, when he suddenly disappeared. Just where, or how, Dick was unable to say; but he was gone, nevertheless; so the detective halted point-blank, to deliberate.

"Where did the young imp scud to?" he muttered. "This don't look quite right, hang me if it does! Perhaps I have been steered into a trap!"

He had no time for further reflection, for there was a rush of feet, and he found himself attacked by three burly men.

The moon was high enough in the heavens, and shed its light down into the gulch, making all objects startlingly distinct, and by it Dick had no difficulty in recognizing one of his assailants as Podesta, the Danite.

"Ha! now we've got you!" Podesta cried, savagely, as he aimed a wicked but unsuccessful blow at the sport. "You're our mutton this time, you cussed Yank!"

"That's a sheep'shead remark!" Dick retorted, as he parried a triplet of blows, successively, and then knocked one of his assailants flat upon his back. "I'll endeavor to make you think there's more mule than mutton in my composition!"

There was no further time for words, for it took the best of attention to business for Dick to hold his own against the onslaught that was now made upon him.

The battle was waging hot and heavy, when an interference occurred, that was a surprise to at least one of the party—Deadwood Dick.

There was a shout, and Ike Davis, the man with the red whiskers, rushed in upon the scene, a cocked six-shooter in either hand.

"Stop! let up, here!" he cried, "or I'll blow yer heads off. Git! you two bloody Mormon curs, or down goes your shanty!"

That settled it. Podesta and his companions gave a glance at the "man with the pops," and then turned and beat a hasty retreat.

"Well, pardner, I reckon they were giving it to you pretty hot!" Davis observed, addressing Dick.

"Oh! they were giving me plenty of business to occupy my attention!" Dick replied, smiling. "I allow you don't belong to the Mormon herd?"

"Well, not that I am aware of," was the reply. "I only arrived to-night, so am a stranger here."

"By way of the pass?"

"Yes. I had a hard time getting here, too, but I found the gatekeeper was an old acquaintance o' mine, and he let me through, and give me my cues, so's I'd know how to work the racket."

"Ah! I understand. Well, as the war seems to be over for the time being, I suppose we might as well meander back toward the hotel."

Davis assented, so they returned toward the Jackpot Inn.

"I take it you're a stranger in the camp, also," Davis observed.

"Well, yes, to a certain extent. I've only been here a short time."

"Were you ever in Carson City?"

"Oh! yes. I came to this place from Carson."

"Ah! Perhaps you may have known a former resident of Carson, named Henry Kirke?"

"I have heard of such a party," was the answer, Dick giving his inquisitor a sharper glance.

"Yes, so I have understood. Kirke formerly had a young wife, did he not?"

"So I understand."

"Kirke skipped the town a defaulter, and left his wife behind to stand the brunt of the disgrace?"

"Yes, so it is said."

"Kirke's wife then took up her abode with a man named Morton Meredith, who chanced to be Kirke's nephew, and he, too, found it necessary to leave Carson, and when he did leave, he left the deserted and unfortunate woman behind, a corpse."

"You seem to have a pretty thorough knowledge of the case. Who are you?"

Dick spoke sharply.

"I am Ike Davis, the brother of the murdered woman!" was the reply.

"Ha! then you have come to Jackpot City for the purpose of—"

"Killing Morton Meredith!" was the fierce answer. "I learned that he was here, and here my six months' search for the man ends. Tomorrow I shall hunt the red-handed scoundrel down and put a bullet through his cowardly heart!"

"If you make an attempt on Meredith's life, you will get yourself into trouble."

"How so?"

"Because Meredith is my game. I came here for the purpose of arresting him and turning him over to the care of the Carson authorities, and that I intend to do. Justice will have a deal first, and after it has a chance, your turn will come!"

"Ah! so that's the how, eh?" replied Davis, slowly. "Well, so long as I am sure that the accursed villain receives the punishment he deserves, I reckon I won't interfere. But if the court tries him and don't hang him, why I'll put a bullet through him before he leaves the bar of justice!"

"Well, you must act as you see fit about that," Dick replied.

"Oh, I'll promise that! I am in disguise, and Meredith will not even know that I am in camp."

When they reached the hotel, Dick announced his intention of retiring, and, bidding Davis good-night, sought his room.

The accommodations of the Jackpot Inn were not of the most fastidious order, and a bed and a stool comprised the furniture of most of the rooms, none of which had as yet been provided with locks.

So, on retiring, Dick took the precaution to push his bedstead against the door.

This was scarcely necessary, as, had any nocturnal prowlers desired to gain entrance to the room, they could have found ready access via the window, which looked out upon the roof of the "lean-to" addition.

He had no particular fear of being disturbed, however, and so went to bed and to sleep, knowing that, being a light sleeper, he would readily awaken, in case there was any intrusion or noise.

How long he had been in repose he could form no idea, when he was suddenly aroused by a shake.

Quickly sitting up in bed, he was astonished to find that he was not the only occupant of the room.

Davis, with the red whiskers, was seated beside the bed, and one of his cocked revolvers was leveled full at the astonished detective's head.

"Hello! What the blazes are you doing here?" Dick demanded.

"I've come for that boodle!" was the grim announcement. "Take care! Don't move an inch or I'll salivate you! Either I get the boodle, or else I take your life. What's your answer?"

"What boodle do you mean?"

"The Kirke fortune."

"Humph! I've not got it."

"You lie! You brought it to Jackpot City to give it to the Princes; and now, I want it, or, when I leave this room, you will be a corpse!"

"I tell you I haven't got it. You can search my clothes, or the room, if you doubt my veracity."

"Maybe you haven't got it here, but you've got it concealed somewhere."

"Supposing I have? Do you think I am going to tell you where it is?"

"If you don't, I'll blow your brains out!"

"Get out! You ain't such a fool as that!"

Dick retorted, coolly; "for if you were to scatter the contents of my cranium about the room and soil old Jackpot's wooden carpets, what would you gain by it? Nothing! and would bury forever the hope of fingering the Kirke fortune, which you seem to covet."

"I don't care a cuss what ye say!" Davis growled. "If you don't tell me where the boodle is I'll have the satisfaction of killing you anyhow."

"You will, eh? Jerusalem! but you're a bloody-minded cuss!"

"Come! I've no time for monkeyin'. Either you spit out the secret while I'm counting a hundred, or off goes the top of your head!"

"Whew! Can you really count as many as a hundred? I didn't know you were a college graduate. But, I say, can't you and I make a bargain?"

"How do you mean?"

"Well, I've learned that Nellie Prince proposes to marry Morton Meredith, which is contrary to the terms of Henry Kirke's will. Accordingly, I don't feel so much disposed to give her the fortune as I did. Now, I'll admit that you've got the bulge on me; but you might shoot me into grease-spots before I'd give up the whole of the fortune. If the boodle don't go to the girl, half of it belongs to me, anyhow. So, if you're content to accept the other half, why, I reckon we can make a dicker!"

"How much will I get?"

"About twenty thousand."

"All right. I'll take that rather than resort to harsher measures!" Davis accepted. "Where's the money?"

"Not here. I shall have to go with you to get it."

"Then get up and dress yourself. But, mind you, I shall plug you if I catch you making a tricky move!"

"You needn't fear. I sha'n't take any such risks. What time is it?"

"It lacks about an hour of daybreak."

"Then we'll have just about time to get the money, and skip before the camp is astir."

Dick arose, and proceeded to dress himself, which operation did not require much time.

Davis watched his every movement narrowly, and kept his revolver ready for instant use, in case of emergency.

When Bristol was ready, he led the way downstairs, and the two men cautiously quitted the hotel.

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The month following Jackpot's return was the third and last of the summer season, and a busy one it was for the nineteen men of the "city."

Mining was abandoned, and the time was occupied in building up the town. Timber was abundant on the northern edge of the peninsula, and this the little saw-mill converted into lumber, and comfortable shanties went up, taking the place of the canvas habitations.

Foreseeing that the future of the camp was likely to draw a swarm of people thither, the General built the hotel, as his own enterprise, so as to have it ready for business. At first he only opened the bar for the dispensation of liquid to the thirsty; and, it may be added, that the proprietor was one of his own best customers.

John Prince built, stocked and opened a general supply store, placing his daughter and niece in charge; then, ten more miners were engaged, and mining was resumed in earnest.

No stragglers, up to this time, had wandered into the town, to carry back to the outer world the secret of Jackpot City's existence, and our handful of pioneers congratulated themselves that, as winter was not far off, there was little likelihood of an invasion of their domain before the opening of the coming spring.

As a necessary precaution against a surprise, however, the cabin was built in Purgatory Pass, at its intersection with the transverse gulch, and telephone connection made between it and Jackpot City, the office being in Prince's store.

Tom Prince and a gigantic half-breed named Dave Dodd, or Deadshot Dave, were then placed in charge of the cabin in the pass, and instructed to exact toll from every one who passed through the gate, and to pass no person on toward the mines, who, in their opinion, was an undesirable character.

The autumn months were delightful and there was nothing to prevent the miners from putting in full time at gold-gathering; hence the coffers of Jackpot, Avalanche and Co. began to fill up in a way highly satisfactory to the parties interested.

In running the toll-gate, Tom Prince and Deadshot Dave took turns of duty, each being on twelve hours at a time, viz: If Prince was night watch one week, the following week he was day watch. When either of the men was off duty, he generally put in his time in Jackpot City.

It so happened, one stormy night, at the close of October, when the rainy season was setting in, that the first stranger made his appearance in Jackpot City, without invitation.

He was mounted on a fine horse, and, as he came from Purgatory Pass, it was generally presumed that he had been passed as "all right," by Tom Prince, who was on night service at the Tollgate.

The new-comer was a large, well-proportioned man, apparently about forty years of age, and not bad-looking, with a full brown beard and mustache, and an intelligent or agreeable countenance—agreeable save one thing, and that was his eyes, which constantly emitted a restless, snaky glitter that was not pleasant to behold.

He was well-dressed, and had the appearance of one who had always been accustomed to good living.

The bar-room of the Jackpot Inn contained nearly the whole male element of the town, when the stranger put in an appearance, and asked for accommodations.

"Who aire you, an' what're ye doin' in this camp?" demanded the General, who presided behind the bar.

"My name is Morton," was the reply in a rather haughty manner, "and I have come here to look around and perhaps locate."

"Oh! ye have, eh? Well, now, mebbe you'll change your mind when ye find that the property around heer belongs to a syndicate, an' there ain't no room for an outsider to squat!"

"Oh! I guess it's not so bad at that!" the stranger replied, coolly. "This young town of yours, whose existence you have so carefully kept a secret from the outside world, is in reality no man's land, as you have not protected yourselves in the least, through the required land or mine entry, nor secured your patents from the Government. Consequently, I have as much right here as any of you!"

This declaration reached the ears of John Prince and Old Avalanche, and they immediately came forward.

"Did I understand you to intimate that you should remain here, without our sanction?" Prince demanded.

"I didn't say so, in so many words," Morton answered, "but, if you want it straight, I say so, now. I've as much right here as you, when

it comes to the legal aspect of the question, and if I see fit to stay here, I shall do so!"

"We will see about that. I have been appointed marshal of this town, and if you do not take your peaceable departure, I shall see you forcibly ejected!"

"You are not such a fool as that!" Morton retorted, indifferently. "I am peaceably disposed, and think you have common sense enough to know that it would be better to have me for a friend than as an enemy!"

"Ah! you dare to threaten, do you?"

"Oh! no, not particularly," Morton replied, stroking his glossy beard, and appearing self-composed. "I simply wanted you to comprehend that I am a man you can't bluff worth a cent. I have known of the existence of these mines, and their wealth, ever since that bald-headed individual behind the bar returned from Salt Lake City. While in the Mormon city he was on a spree, the better part of the time, and when in his cups, he showed a big nugget of gold around in nearly every place he visited, and he made his brags that he knew where he could get plenty more like it; so when he left Salt Lake, I followed him. Since that time, from different elevated points of observation, I have watched the progress of things, here below, and finally came to the conclusion that it was about time for me to come down and see what kind of a showing there was for me. So I came."

"Now, sir, during the time I have known of the existence of this New El Dorado, I have kept a still tongue in my head. Had I felt so disposed I could have gone to other mining-camps and brought a flood of ever-ready stampers down upon this camp big enough to have filled the whole peninsula. More than that, had I seen fit to go to the pains and expense, I could have legally secured this tract of territory as my own and had you all dispossessed. So you see, my friend, if you insist that I cannot remain in your camp, why, I am quite willing to leave you *for a time*, but I am not prepared to say how long I shall be absent."

Jackpot, Avalanche and Prince now saw that they had made an egregious error in not making the customary entry with the Government, and had rendered themselves liable to heavy penalties and ejection. They certainly were in this Morton's power, for if they further incurred his enmity, not only could he bring Government trouble upon their heads, but he could betray the existence of Jackpot City to the world at large, the inevitable rush would follow, and riches would be wrenched from the partners' grasp.

There was but one thing to do, for self-protection, and that was done.

A meeting was held that night by the company, and Owen Morton was admitted to a partnership equal to that of the others.

After that, all went on smoothly for a couple of weeks, and then there came more trouble.

Morton suddenly disappeared from the town one night, leaving no word whither he was going, or when he expected to return.

This caused his partners considerable surprise and anxiety, which became intensified to actual alarm when it was discovered, the following morning, that poor Tom Prince had been foully murdered during the night at the Tollgate, where he had been on night duty.

For weeks, afterward, the excitement was at boiling heat; the guard at the gate was trebled, and extra precautions taken against a surprise.

But a month passed, and nothing was seen or heard of Owen Morton.

Winter set in, and the denizens of Echo Canyon began to breathe freer, as it was prophesied that there would be no trouble before spring opened.

But, that was where the mistake occurred.

The blow came when least expected, and watchfulness had grown lax.

For one stormy morning the citizens of Jackpot City were aroused from their slumbers by the startling intelligence that over two hundred Mormons with their families had invaded the peninsula, bag and baggage, and taken possession of the town.

And this proved to be correct.

Two hundred resolute, well-armed men there were, the most of whom had a plurality of wives, and the whole under the leadership of their alleged prophet and elder, Morton Meredith, in whom the citizens of Jackpot had no difficulty in recognizing Owen Morton, although his face was now as smooth as a woman's.

Well, to make the remainder of our retrospect brief, the Mormons took possession of everything. Meredith produced papers to prove that he and his flock had made a purchase of the Gov-

ernment of a thousand acres of land, encompassing Jackpot City and a portion of Purgatory Pass, and had conformed with all the requirements of the statutes.

Meredith at once notified Jackpot, Avalanche and Co. that he was henceforth ruler of the town, and it would be governed on Mormon principles. If they preferred to remain, as laborers, he would allow them to retain their habitations, and the General could keep his hotel by yielding half the net profits to Meredith.

Our pioneers smarted bitterly under this new order of things, but after a secret consultation, resolved to remain for a while, at any rate.

The Tollgate was left in charge of Deadshot Dave, as agent for the Mormon ruler, who, of course, took the receipts, and thus it was that Meredith had succeeded in establishing a little monarchy of his own in the heart of the Humboldt Mountains.

The winter months were mostly devoted to improvements, preparatory to an active mining campaign on the opening of spring.

Shanties, stores, saloons, a Mormon church, a stamp-mill and numerous other enterprises were established under Meredith's rule, and over all the Mormon influence prevailed.

The three pards and their friends were forced to adopt many of the ordinances of the Latter-Day Saints, particularly as regarded attending church, and obedience to the commands of the Elder, as Meredith was known.

Of course the little band of Gentiles chafed under this order of things, but, the truth be known, they were only biding their time, for the end was not yet.

"Be firm, boys, and be patient, for our turn is yet to come!" John Prince would say to his flock, as when, by prearranged signals, they would be called into secret conclave in the dead hours of night. "We can't strike yet, but our chance will come, and then we will cause an insurrection that will sweep these Mormon devils into the waters of Cyclone Creek, and Jackpot City shall be our own again."

This feeling among the Gentiles gradually grew so intensified, that it became a mania with them, and they stood ready for bloodshed at a moment's notice.

Thus the winter passed, and spring opened up warm and glorious, rich alike with nature's floral offerings and nature's promises of golden gain.

Which brings up to the opening proper of our story.

CHAPTER II.

THE SAD TRIALS OF OLD AVALANCHE.

THE spring of 188— was an early one. The snow having disappeared in March, except on the mountain-tops, and then followed a long spell of bright, warm weather, that brought forth the grass and foliage, in great luxuriance, and, a little later, the mountain-sides became covered with spring flowers, whose bright colors and fragrance Jackpot City got the full benefit of.

Mining had been resumed in dead earnest, and the output surpassed the expectations of even the most sanguine, so that Morton Meredith could lay back in his easy-chair, in his snug, well-appointed cottage, and see the wealth rolling in upon him by the hundreds of dollars per day.

Meredith, by the way, was unmarried, but this did not conflict with his Mormon views, and on the first of April every man in the camp, except himself and one other, was ordered to take unto himself a wife, or undergo two weeks' imprisonment in a rocky dungeon in the mountain-side, that had been specially prepared for the purpose, without food or water.

As there was not one man out of a thousand who could endure the punishment, April 1st was, accordingly, a wedlock day, all of the former male founders and settlers of the little town being forced to "hitch up" in Benedictine traces, except one.

Our friend General Jackpot, was fortunate enough to get a comely-looking woman, who was possessed of a business mind, and who set about at once, putting the Jackpot Inn into order.

Poor Old Avalanche, however, hero of hundreds of well-won battles, was not so fortunate.

A long, lank, scraggy, vinegar-tempered virago was put off on him, who was known among the Mormons as "Sal Slap, the Scrapper." She was of prodigious strength despite her lank, lean appearance, and freely bragged

Podesta whistled.

"I don't believe it!" he declared. "The gal hates him worse than Satan hates holy water."

"That makes no difference. The girl is going to marry him, just the same, for I heard her say so. She is to come into a big fortune, in a few days, and it is with the expectation of getting a grab at this that Meredith is marrying her!"

"Where's the fortune comin' from?"

"From this man Bristol, who was sent here with it, to give it to the girl, but, he is not going to disburse the money until he succeeds in liberating John Prince. See?"

"Yes. Go on."

"Well, our business is to get this fortune before the girl gets it; then, after we've got it, we can inform the other Mormons of Meredith's proposed treachery, and if they've got any grit in them, they'll make it hot for him!"

"You can bet they will!" Podesta grimly agreed. "They've set a pile o' store in him, and when they find he's goin' to give 'em the shake, why they'll—well! I wouldn't like to stand in his shoe-leather. But, go on. How are we to get at this fortune? Is it a case of tapping this cuss Bristol on the head? I'll agree to do that, free gratis, for I owe the cuss a grudge?"

"No! a different plan must be pursued, than that. This fellow, Bristol, is by no means a greenhorn and it's safe to bet he's too sharp to be found with the boodle about his person. He has it concealed somewhere, and only by becoming on intimate terms with him do I hope to learn where it is hidden."

"So listen, and I will tell you my plans. A couple of years ago, I traveled a brief term with a snap dramatic troupe playing the mining-camps. The troupe busted, and, to get my pay, I seized the wardrobes, some of which are very fine. I shall now disguise myself as a roughly dressed, red-whiskered miner, and pretend to be a Mormon from Salt Lake, named like Davis. You are to watch a favorable opportunity, and, together with a couple of your pals, make a sham attack on Bristol, taking care to use no weapons. I will rush to the rescue, and drive you off, at the point of the pistol. Of course Bristol will thank me for the interference, and in this way I shall play my cards to his further acquaintance, and endeavor to learn the hiding-place of the boodle. If I am not successful in this plan, why, it will be time enough to adopt other measures."

"I dunno whether I'm counted in for this racket, or not," Podesta said, rather dubiously, as he passed his hand over his left optic, which was still "indisposed," as a result of a contact with Deadwood Dick's fist. "That cuss strikes out harder than a mule can kick, and he may salivate us with cold lead, if we go for him!"

"Pshaw! are you afraid? Why, three of you ought to keep him too busy to draw a weapon, until I rush in, as peacemaker, and separate you!"

"Humph! How are we to be sure you will be around, at the time?"

"Oh! I'll be on hand, never fear!"

"Well, supposing I agree to this proceeding, what am I to get?"

"When we have succeeded in getting the money, you will get half."

"How much will that be?"

"I don't know, but probably a couple of thousand dollars."

"All right. I'm your honeycomb for any such sum as that, you bet. When will you be ready?"

"I will get ready during the day, but the attack had better not be made before night."

"Correct. To-night it shall be, then. I'll get Hookey Ben and Jim Crow to help me. S'pose ye won't object if we punch the fellow's head for him?"

"No. I've no particular objections to that, but no other weapons than your fists must be used. Be all ready, as soon as it is dark, and if you catch Bristol on the street, go for him, and I will be on hand to act my part. In the mean time let whisky alone, so you will be in condition for the work ahead of you. I must be going now, but will depend on you to-night."

"All right. You'll not be disappointed," Podesta responded, and then the unscrupulous young woman hastened away toward the Prince cottage.

"If the plan works, and I get my hands on the money, who shall say my triumph is not great?" she thought, exultantly. "It will then be I who will be the dictator, and oh! won't I make Morton Meredith regret the choice he has made, and playing false to me?"

CHAPTER XI.

DEADWOOD DICK'S DECREE.

AFTER parting with Nellie Prince, Dick Bristol made his way direct to the shanty occupied by the Lanches, and after some parley, succeeded in gaining an audience with Sal Samantha and her "reformed" spouse, the veteran Annihilator.

Avalanche, now divested of his suit of broad-cloth, and in lieu thereof wearing one of Samantha's wrappers, over his undergarments, was engaged at a wash-tub, in the arduous task of cleansing the family linen, and his appearance was so truly ludicrous, that Deadwood Dick could not help roaring with laughter.

"By Jove! Avalanche, you look all the world like a heathen Chinee, except you lack the pig-tail," he saluted.

"Great ham-bone! I feel ten times wuss than one, Dicky, me boyee. But, that's no time to stop now, ner no help fer it. Sarah tells me that no one can be a pure and perfect Mormon, except he or she is conversant w' ther art o' cleansing, an' as I warn't particularly well versed in this partic'lar science, the old gal's breakin' me in like a farmer breaks in a two-year-old steer what he wants ter take ther preemium at ther country fair. After she gits me graduated in this line, she's goin' ter larn yer old Annihilator how ter knit quadrille socks. Tell ye what, me boyee, if she's anything she's a hustler, is that same leetle child bride of mine."

"You Avalanche, if you don't shet up your yawp, I'll fire a skillet at you," vociferated Sal Samantha, giving the Annihilator a look that would have wilted a mullein-stalk. "Now then, Mr. Deadwood Dick, ef you've got any bizness here, as you say, spit it out, or else pick up your feet and git!"

"Yea, Dicky!" put in Avalanche, dolefully. "If you have no business here, you'd better waltz hence, for ef ye don't, Sal Samantha will waltz you, as sure's a ham-bone discombobberated ther terrestrial gravitation of old Joner."

"If you two pillars of the Mormon Church will give me your attention, I will proceed to unfold to you a revelation that will measure thirty-six inches to the yard," Dick replied.

Accordingly, he proceeded to explain the motive of his visit to Jackpot City, what he had learned since his arrival, and what his plans were for the future.

As he had expected, the narration excited the interest of both the Annihilator and his wife—so much so, as regards the latter, that she forgot to admonish Avalanche to stick to his work at the washtub.

"By cracky! I had no ideer you was sech a peart young chap!" Sal declared, when Dick had finished. "You've got a level head on ye, young man, an' I hope you'll make Morton Meredith dance till the last fiddle-string is busted. I allus know'd he was a snake in the grass—an' so's all the Mormon tribe, fer that matter. I shouldn't never have jined 'em only I was a poor, friendless waif o' the world, an' wanted a husband to shoulder my sorriers and responsibilities thr'u life. I was told if I jined the Mormons I would be pervided with a husband, and, sure enough, I corraled old man Lanche. He warn't exactly to my suitin', but he's better than no support at all, and I expect to make something of him by application and perseverance. In a couple of years' time I hope to have him trained down to such a point that he'll be about as perfect as a common-bred human can be made."

"Yes, Dicky, me boyee, Sarah does not prevaricate when she makes that assertion!" the Annihilator groaned. "In two years more she'll have me trained down to such a nicety that there will not be enough left of me to make a shadder on a sunny day; and if you ever happen to see a pair of wings cavortin' along through the ethereal vastness, you will sit ye down and reflect that et war all that aire left o' ther once famuss Terrific Triangle."

Dick tarried but a short time at the shanty home of the strangely-matched couple, but in that time he succeeded in enlisting them in his plans.

He then returned to the hotel.

About mid-afternoon he once more quitted the hotel, and awaiting a favorable opportunity, stealthily left Echo Canyon by the way of Purgatory Pass.

Once within the confines of this gloomy hallway of nature, he struck out for the Tollgate still presided over by Deadshot Dave, in the interests of Meredith.

The horses belonging to the denizens of Jackpot City frequently wandered into the Pass, and Dick soon came across his own animal, which recognized him with a whinny.

Mounting, without saddle or bridle, he dashed up the gulch at a swift gallop, and soon reached the gate.

As he dismounted, the door of the cabin opened, and Deadshot Dave made his appearance; and from the fact that the two men shook hands, it was evident they were not strangers.

"Well, Dick, what's the best word? I was beginning to fear you had got into trouble," Deadshot said, as the two seated themselves on a rustic bench.

"Oh, no; I'm alive and kicking," was the reply. "Have you heard from Carson?"

"Yes. Gray Eagle returned last night, with a letter from Captain Kramer, who says he will arrive here with a couple of Carson detectives, some time to-morrow. A colony of miners, from points between here and Carson, will arrive a few days later. How are matters in Jackpot?"

"Everything will be ready for the capture of Meredith, Thursday night, providing Kramer arrives all right."

"Oh! he will be here, without a doubt, for he hasn't any too much money, and the liberal offer of the Carson authorities will be an incentive toward hurrying him up."

"I hope so. Has a man known as Jockey Sam passed this place, since morning?"

"Yes. He was bound for Lawson's Ranch, after a minister, he said."

"Ah! all right. We'll treat Mr. Morton Meredith to a surprise, Thursday night, which I don't think he will fail to appreciate if not enjoy."

"Do you anticipate that the Mormons will kick up a fuss, when you arrest Meredith?"

"I don't know. The arrest will be made as quietly as possible, but if I see there is to be any trouble, I will have him taken out of camp, under the cover of darkness. I think, however, that my bulletin will have an effect to change their feelings somewhat toward Meredith, for I reckon, they won't want to stick to him, at the risk of getting strung up. Have you got the bulletin ready?"

"Yes; do you want to see it?"

"Yes."

"All right. Come inside. It's all ready for you, when you want to take it away."

Accordingly, the two men entered the cabin. Fastened to the rough, unplastered wall, was a piece of muslin, reaching from the roof to the floor, and about three or four feet in width. This cloth, with the aid of paint and brush, had been skillfully lettered, and contained the following proclamation:

"DEADWOOD DICK'S DECREE!"

"To whom it may concern:—

"Having thoroughly investigated the matter to which this order refers, and found in existence a hotbed of vice and immorality cloaked under the guise of Mormonism, but with which the Mormon Church of Utah has no connection:

"THIS IS TO CERTIFY, that I, Deadwood Dick, Prince of Purgatory Pass, do hereby decree that this settlement, known as Jackpot City, shall cease to exist as such, on and after the first Friday after the public display of this bulletin, and shall thereafter be governed by the law-abiding Gentiles.

"Warning is therefore given the followers of Morton Meredith to immediately and peaceably leave Echo Canyon, or else forswear all allegiance to Mormonism and return to the Gentile faith. All persons found in Jackpot City at noon of the day this decree goes into effect, who do not wear a red ribbon about their throats, as a pledge that they intend in future to lead the lives of Gentiles and law-abiding citizens, will be arrested and forced to work out a term of servitude in the mines. All persons not desirous of remaining under Gentile rule, can now leave for other parts, but before issuing through the gates of Purgatory Pass, will be forced to give up all uncoined gold or silver in their possession, which will be turned over to the Government, by me its duly empowered agent.

"This decree applies to every person now in Jackpot City, with the single exception of Meredith, who will be turned over to the authorities of Carson City, to answer to the charge of murder.

"The terms of this decree will be enforced to the letter, and Jackpot City will hereafter be known by another name.

"By order of

"DEADWOOD DICK,
"Prince of Purgatory Pass."

"There! how does that suit you?" Deadshot Dave asked, pointing to his work proudly.

"It's just as I want it!" Dick replied. "You are an artist, Dave, and I'll see that you're well paid for this work."

"Will you take it with you now?"

"No. I haven't time to bother with it now. You can bring it as far as the mouth of the pass, an hour before daybreak to-morrow morning, and I will be there to meet you. We will then post it in a prominent place before the town is

that she could lick any galoot in the camp, tooth, tongue, or toe-nail.

The only man who refused positively to take a Mormon wife, was John Prince, and he was promptly cast into the dungeon, there to remain without food or drink, until the expiration of the fourteen days, when, if he still refused to marry, he was to be banished from the camp.

Prince did not flinch in the least, but bidding good-by to his daughter and niece, entered the dark, dank dungeon, whose exact location was known to but two persons—Mort Meredith and his "heeler" Paul Podesta—there to remain, until death, most likely, would claim him.

Meredith's tyranny did not end here.

He issued strict orders that no one be admitted to Jackpot City via the Tollgate of Purgatory Pass, who would not sign a promise to join the Mormon faith and adhere to its requirements. If a person gained access to the town without the "sign" of acquiescence, which consisted of a triangular piece of flat stone about 3x3x3 inches in size, he was to be tried by a special tribunal, and a disposition made of him or her, as the case might be.

It so happened, that one evening about half-past eight, a stranger was discovered sauntering along the main street, in fact, the only street in Jackpot City.

Just when he had come, or where he had come from, no one was prepared to say, for telephone communication with the Tollgate failed to establish the fact that he had come by that route, as no one answering to his description had passed through the gate.

Hence, there was a mystery, and Paul Podesta at once communicated the fact to his master.

"Some strolling vagabond, I presume," Meredith observed, as he idly sipped his evening tea. "Simply keep an eye on him, and I will see him later, before I retire."

In the mean time, the stranger sauntered back and forth along the single street of the town, which was fringed on one side with stores, dwellings, and so forth, and on the other side by the madly-rushing waters of Cyclone Creek, which swept around the peninsula's point with a never-ceasing roar.

The night was one of the balmyest in early April, and the moon had soared high enough in the heavens to send a flood of light into Echo Canyon and upon the young city.

The saloons were well patronized, and nearly the whole population were out of doors, sauntering about, and, to all, the stranger was an object of much curiosity and interest.

He was of medium build, with a trim, athletic figure, whose "points" denoted both strength and agility; his face was round, pleasant and intelligent, the cheeks glowing with the tinge of excellent health.

His eyes were keen and brilliant; his hair was worn long down over his shoulders, while a graceful mustache adorned his upper lip.

Not a man was there in Jackpot City who could "hold a candle to him" in point of good looks, and numerous maidens fair abroad that night were by no means blind to the fact.

The stranger was attired in a suit of light-colored woollen goods that fitted him perfectly, wore a white shirt and collar, a jaunty milk-hued sombrero, and a pair of patent-leather top-boots.

This completed his make-up, except for a gold-headed cane he twirled in his hand as he walked along.

In one of his strolls to and fro, he suddenly found himself confronted by Paul Podesta.

Podesta was a burly six-footer, of dark, ugly visage, and had won the reputation of being a hard man to handle.

If report went for anything, he had formerly been a Danite leader during the reign of terror in and about Salt Lake City, and a bloodthirsty one at that.

There was a wicked gleam, too, in his eyes as, with arms akimbo, he confronted the stranger and thus saluted him:

"Looker heer, boss! I would like to know who you aire, before you go gallivantin' 'round this town any longer!"

"You would? Well, I don't know that I am under obligations to satisfy your curiosity. Who are you?"

"I'm Podesta, and I'm the marshal an' hull police force of this town combined, as you'll mighty quick find out, if you don't shout out your name and tell what your business is here!"

"So, that's the way of it, eh?" and the stranger coolly twirled his mustache. "Suppose I don't see fit to reveal my name?"

"Then I'll arrest and imprison you."

"I reckon not, Johnny. I ain't taking ar-

rests so freely, now, as I once did. If you don't want your skull cracked, have the kindness to step out of my way."

Podesta did not budge, but stared at the other in astonishment.

"Ye dare me?" he finally roared.

"I told you to step out of my way," was the cool reply. "Are you going to get?"

"No!" thundered Podesta, "but I'm going to yank you in, all the same," and he laid hold of the stranger's left arm.

Better not to have done so, for almost simultaneously with his grip, the stranger's iron-like fist caught him between the eyes and sent him tumbling to the ground in an insensible condition.

This little incident caused a crowd to collect, but paying no attention to it, the stranger mounted the steps of the piazza of the Jackpot Inn, and entered the bar-room.

As he did so he received a hearty slap upon the shoulder, while a joyful voice sung out:

"By ther great ham-bone that discombobberated ther reflections of old Jonah! Et's Deadwood Dick, sure's I'm a live sinner. Jumpin' Jericho! how do ye sagaciate, Dicky, old boyee?"

The new-comer turned in surprise, to find himself confronted by the Great Annihilator—the veritable Old Avalanche.

"What, you, Avalanche? Jove! but this is a surprise," and the famous sport-detective seized the veteran's extended hand warmly. "What on earth brings you into this Mormon den?"

"Dicky, me boy, I war one o' the founders o' this hyer town, but thet war before the Mormons cum an' overpowered us an' tuk teetotal persussion. Et war me an' my two pards, who fu'st discovered ther auriferous hyer, but we've hed to give it up to these Mormon spawn of Satan, an' we're now ther slaves. Great ham-bone! Who'd ever thort thet ther great cavortin' Injun epidemic would 'a' come to this?" And the Annihilator wiped away an imaginary tear.

"Well, old friend, I'm sorry to hear that you're in trouble," Deadwood Dick replied. "I'd sort of lost track of you, and did not know as I'd ever run across you again. Why, you've changed wonderfully since I saw you last."

"Grown older, hey?"

"Yes; and you look as if you'd seen some hard times."

"So I have, Dicky, me boy, so I have! First, I've lost my two old side-pardners, who did so much toward makin' ther Terrific Triangle famuss. Yas, both Prudence Cordelia and me William-goat have gone to that bourne whence none returneth, an' et c'lar knocked the heart o' mine lop-sided ter part wi' 'em, you kin bet. But thet loss warn't ace-high ter a full hand ter ther affliction I'm now bowed down with."

"No? Well, I'm sorry to hear that, Avalanche. You've surely seen enough ups and downs in the past, that your old age ought to be blessed with peace and comfort," Dick returned. "What's the nature of your new affliction, may I ask?"

"Great ham-bone, then you haven't heard about it, hey? Oh! et's suthin' wuss'n the small-pox or ther yellor janders. You haven't seen her, then?"

"Her?"

"Yas, her! ther rip-snortin', tearin', swearin' triple tornado, that shrieks slaughter, and vomicks fire and fury! That's her, only ten times wuss! Oh, Lordy! just wait till ye see her!"

"But, see here, whom do you refer to by her? I don't comprehend your meaning, Avalanche?"

"Ye don't, eh? Waal, mebbe not. That's because ye ain't seen her. No, ye ain't seen her yet, fer ef ye had, yer comprehension would be as clear as crystal!" the old man said, slowly, and then relapsing into silence.

"Humph!" Dick said, considerably puzzled by his old partner's actions. "I don't see but what I'm as much in the dark as ever, and hanged if I ain't inclined to believe that either you're in love, or else you're out of your head. I rather think it's a love affair, eh? I say, Alva, is she a beauty?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders, and gave a shiver of disgust.

"A beauty?" he grunted. "Jumpin' Jericho! anything but that. Dicky, me boy, I ain't a mylionair, ner nothin' o' ther sort, but I have a comfortable boodle put away, an' I'm willin' to bet every red of it that ye can't find an uglier virago 'twixt hyer an' Halifax then thet selfsame old termagant, Mrs. Old Avalanche!"

"Mrs. Old Avalanche?" echoed Dick, in genuine astonishment—Mrs. Old Avalanche! Why, in the name of all that's wonderful, you

don't mean to tell me you've been, gone and got spliced, old man?"

"Perzactly and pos'tively," the Annihilator grimly assented. "Tied up tighter than a ten-pound brick. Yes, me boy, yer old man is no longer a ragin' epidemic o' demolition—no longer a double-action disaster to the evil ones, but, behold! he stands before you a martyr to myrmidon machinations of Mormon rule. I'm a slave—a poor old wreck of a once booming blizzard, bowed down, cowed down, and irretrievably tied to the apron-strings of a she catamount, who makes me toe the mark, and dance juba, without even so much as the music of an old, squawkin' bull-fiddle. Ah, hum!" and the Annihilator heaved a deep sigh, and this time wiped away a genuine tear.

As for Deadwood Dick, he could not refrain from an outburst of laughter.

"Well, I'll be shot if that don't beat the deck," he ejaculated. "Just to think that an old rascal like you, now nearly a septuagenarian, should enter into the supreme state of matrimony. It's the richest thing out."

"Oh, ye needn't laugh, fer it ain't no leffin' matter!" the Annihilator protested. "Great ham-bone! d'ye s'pose ther great main spoke o' ther Terrific Triangle w'd 'a' hitched up wi' ary petticoater, ef he hadn't bin forced to? No, sir-ee! bob-tail burro. I tell ye thet we Gentiles war forced to marry, or stand imprisonment fer a hull fortnight, without food or water. So all of us war hitched up, 'cept one o' my pards, an' he's in prison now, fer refusin' to obey the mandate. Ther rest o' ther boys fared better than me, 'cause they were given pretty tolerable fair sort o' weemen. Even old General Jackpot got a wide-awake sort of a bizness shemale; but, alas! it was my sad lot to have the worst vixen on God's footstool saddled off on me. Jest wait till ye see her, me boyee, an' ef ye don't say that she who war Sal Slap, before I married her, aire ther wu'st case o' Helenblazes you ever seed'd, you kin hev what's left o' me skulp what the red-skins didn't tech, years ago."

"Pshaw! you don't mean to tell me it's as bad as that do you, old man? Sure the famous Annihilator would not submit to being henpecked by anything that wears calico?"

"Submit! henpecked! Great ham-bone that caused the last sickness of old Joner!" the veteran ejaculated, "henpecked ain't no name for it! Me boyee, I tell ye ther truth, I don't own so much as a cent's worth o' stock in my hull consarned carcass. She's supreme ruler of all that's left o' this roarin' Injun epidemic. By day I have to work in the mines, like an ordinary mortal, an' turn over my wages to her. She makes me sweep the house, wash the dishes an' comb her grizzly ha'r; I hev to go to bed whenever she sez so; she restricts me tew two pipes an' one chaw o' terbaccy a day, makes me say my catechism, and teetotally abstain from my once favorite three fingers of Red Eye. Snortin' salamanders! ef she war ever ter catch me h'ist in a dose of bug-juice tew my bugle-trap, I wouldn't have no use for a chair for a week. Oh! she's a screamer, an' no mistake, and yer old pard is no longer a livin' reality—nothin' but a grim shadder o' remorseless fate."

"Ah, Dicky, it's lucky ye don't know all. Et's lucky yer not hitched up along wi' sech a cavortin' cyclone o' concentrated cussedness. Why, w'd you b'lieve it, the old fury sez that when I shuffle off this mortal coil she's goin' ter have me cremated, and sell my ashes for cockroach exterminator!"


"I hardly think the supply would meet the demand," Dick laughed. "But, come along, Avalanche, and have a smile with me, for the sake of old times."

"Dicky, my boyee, I darsn't!" the Annihilator impressively declared, as he glanced nervously about. "If I war to imbibe a taste of liker, that pullet of mine would know it afore ther ticklin' sensation had got out o' my throat, an' then I'd get one of thunderin' est manlin's man every bad, an' ten to one, she'd make me go to bed, and stay there for a week without a morsel to eat or drink."

"Pshaw! nonsense! I won't allow you to be so chicken-hearted. All's the matter with you is the lack of a sufficient amount of stimulant to brace you up. help you to assert your independence; then I'll guarantee the weaker member of the family won't boss you around so much!"

"Weaker! Oh! Lord! If she only was weak!" the Annihilator groaned, as he permitted himself to be dragged up to the bar. "I blush to admit, Dicky me daisy, that a little o' the amber would strengthen me up a bit, an' I should be only tew hilariously happy to h'ist to yer health, ef I warn't afeard o' Sal makin' et on-

Nevada



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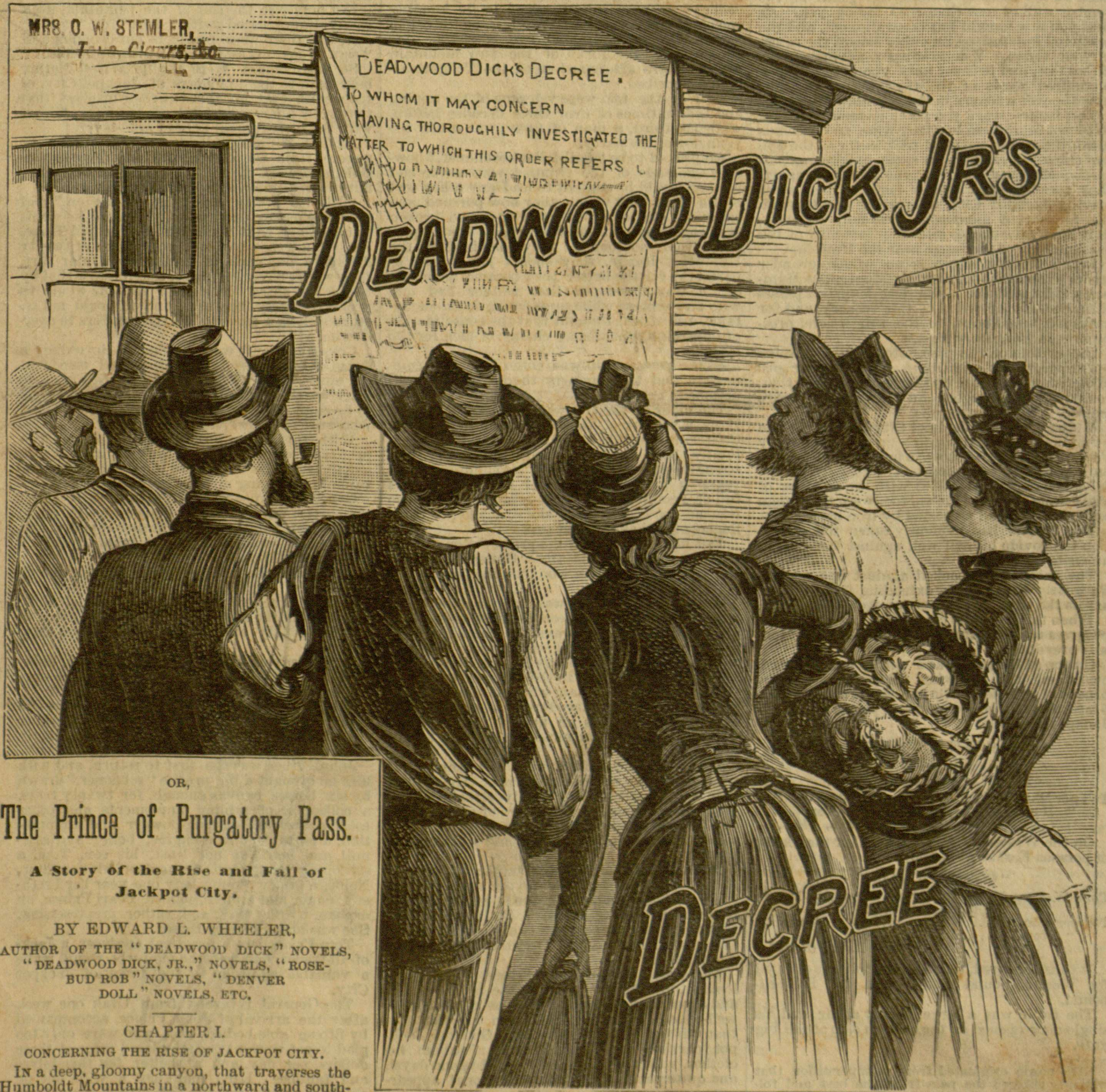
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Vol. XXIII.



OR,

The Prince of Purgatory Pass.

A Story of the Rise and Fall of
Jackpot City.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF THE "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS,
"DEADWOOD DICK, JR.," NOVELS, "ROSE-
BUD ROB" NOVELS, "DENVER
DOLL" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING THE RISE OF JACKPOT CITY.

In a deep, gloomy canyon, that traverses the
Humboldt Mountains in a northward and south-
erly direction, and situate upon a peninsula, or
bar of land, bordered, in the background, by

WHEN THE PEOPLE OF JACKPOT CAME FORTH, AND, ONE AFTER ANOTHER, READ 'DEADWOOD
DICK'S DECREE, THERE WAS NO END TO EXCITEMENT AND CONSTERNATION.

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Deadshot Dave ain't neither of 'em at the Tollgate to-night, an' so there'll be a clear way!"

"If they are not at the Tollgate, where are they?" Meredith demanded suspiciously.

"Dunno for certain. I have an idee they're in camp, and that thar'll be an attack made on the gang what aire quartered in the breaker 'twixt now and mornin'."

"Then, there's no time to be lost!" Meredith cried, paling with alarm. "If we don't get out of camp at once, we may not be able to get out at all. Fetch out the girl, or I will!"

"Hark! listen!" cried Avalanche. "Ha! didn't I tell you? The music is begun!"

They all listened, and distinctly heard the crack of rifles, coming from the direction of the stamp-mill.

The Gentiles had begun the battle for the possession of Jackpot City!

Meredith became greatly excited.

"Bring forth that girl!" he roared.

"I am here, sir!" was the announcement, as a figure clad in a long waterproof, stepped from the adjoining room—a personage who wore a dark veil to conceal the face from view, and who, otherwise, looked very womanly. "Are you ready, Morton?"

"Yes, I am ready!" snapped the villain. "Here, preacher, get up and tie this knot without any unnecessary palaver! Hello! what you wearin' that for, girl?" and he snatched away the veil.

Then, he leaped back with a hoarse cry, as he saw the deception that had been practiced upon him, for he recognized the smiling face of Deadwood Dick!

At the same instant, Deadshot Dave and another powerful man appeared upon the scene, and seized and handcuffed the baffled Elder, while Deadwood Dick's crinoline fell to the floor, and he stood forth in his now proper dress, smiling and triumphant.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

"MORTON MEREDITH," the detective cried, "you are my prisoner! I arrest you for the murder of the late Mrs. Henry Kirke, in Carson City, not to mention the more recent murder of your wife, and for other crimes. The scaffold has long awaited your coming, and now it shall be gratified in stretching the neck of one of the vilest villains the wild West ever knew."

Words are inadequate to express the furious rage of the baffled wretch, and only through utter exhaustion did he relapse into sullen silence.

In the mean time, the sounds of battle became fiercer in the direction of the ore-breaker, and presently a burning building lighted up the night.

Preparations for leaving the camp were now hastened, and within an hour a party, headed by Deadwood Dick, was wending its way on horseback through the gloomy confines of Purgatory Pass.

Besides Dick as director, there were Deadshot Dave and three officers from Carson, who acted as keepers of Morton Meredith; Nellie Prince and her father; Joe Sands, having charge of Pearl Prince, who was also a prisoner; and last but not least, General Jackpot, who was going to Prescott on business.

Old Avalanche and Sal remained behind to try their fortunes with the new town that was to succeed Jackpot City under Gentile rule.

When day dawned Purgatory Pass was left behind, and the little cavalcade was well on its tedious journey across the Territory, to Carson.

The first two days of the journey passed, with out incident worthy of mention.

All parties except it were the prisoners, were in good spirits, and everything seemed to promise that the journey would be completed without trouble.

On the early evening of the third day, however, when the party was camped in a little valley, something occurred to change the aspect of affairs.

On a distant hillock, a single horseman was discovered, who appeared to be surveying the camp through a field-glass.

It was seen that he was a white man, but, further than that could not be made out.

He remained watching the camp a few minutes, then disappeared from view.

Nothing more was seen of him until the next sunset, when he again appeared, and disappeared as before.

What did it mean?

Here was a mystery which none could explain.

Yes—one could explain, for Morton Meredith sent for Deadwood Dick, and the detective found his prisoner in a great state of excitement.

"In the name of mercy and humanity I beg of you to set me free!" he cried. "I am doomed, anyhow, and the few hours I have to live I want to have in freedom!"

"It is not in my power to set you free were I so disposed!" Dick replied. "You are in the custody of the two officers from Carson, and they will not let you go!"

Meredith groaned aloud.

"You can influence them to free me. For God's sake, I beg of you to do so!"

"Impossible. Why are you suddenly so terrified?"

"Because I am doomed!"

"What do you mean?"

"I have but a few more hours to live. I will never reach Carson alive!"

"Why not?"

"Because he is after me!"

"He! Whom do you mean?"

"The horseman!"

"Ah! You know him, then?"

"I wish I didn't!"

"Who is he?"

"His name is Davis. He is an outlaw, and the brother of Kirke's wife, whom I smothered. For the love of Heaven, let me free!"

"Impossible!" and Dick walked away.

But, it was with an effort, for he really pitied the miserable wretch.

That night passed without further incident; and nothing more was seen of the strange horseman, as, early the next day the cavalcade moved on.

Meredith was pale, weak and exhausted. If one might judge by the wild glare in his eyes, the tortures of the living damned had been his during the night.

No halt was made until night; and then it was only at the solicitation of Meredith; for the party lacked only ten miles of being in Carson City.

"For God's sake, give me one more night out of prison!" Meredith pleaded; and, consulting with the officers, Bristol granted the request.

The halt was made at the edge of a little prairie motte, the fires kindled, and a primitive supper prepared, of which Meredith ate ravenously.

His spirits seemed braced up, and, after supper, he called Dick and the others around him.

"This is my last night on earth," he explained, "and I shall pay the penalty of my crimes. I've tried to stave off the horror of a felon's death, and have succeeded, for to-night I shall meet my death like a man, and now, before bidding you all good-by, I want to say that I bear no malice toward any of you. As I have lived, so do I deserve to die, without a feeling of pity or sympathy from the least of you."

Then turning to Dick, he added:

"When Davis comes, surrender to him, without opposition. Leave me now, all of you, for I would be alone with my misery!"

Somewhat awed, they withdrew, and a hush fell over the camp.

But no one felt like sleep. All seemed imbued with the apprehension that the end was near, so far as Meredith was concerned.

And they were not mistaken, for at moonrise the climax came.

With surprising suddenness, as if they had risen from the earth, twenty masked men swept into the camp, all armed.

Their leader was a brawny six-footer.

"Who commands this camp?" he demanded.

"I do!" Dick replied, stepping forward.

"You have a prisoner, one Meredith?"

"We have!"

"Well, I want him!"

"What for?"

"Vengeance! He murdered my sister, and his fate is sealed. Do I have him, or shall I take him?"

Deadwood Dick was not given a chance to reply, for Meredith arose, pale but stern.

"I'm here, Davis!" he said. "I am at your disposal, and have but one favor to ask, which I think you will grant?"

"Name it!"

"It is that you will make no scene, here, in the presence of the ladies!"

"The favor is granted!" was the reply.

Meredith was then taken and mounted upon a horse, and, after he had bidden his former captors good-by, Davis and his gang galloped away.

Little remains to be told, to render our story complete.

When Dick and his party reached Carson he turned over to John and Nellie Prince the Kirke

fortune, and received a handsome recompense for the work he had performed.

He then left Carson at once, for duty again called.

The Princes still reside in Carson except Pearl, who, being forgiven her baseness and wickedness, left for parts more congenial.

There is a likelihood, too, that Joe Sands will also become a member of the Prince family.

Jackpot City, under a new and more pretentious name, still exists, with Deadshot Dave, Old Avalanche and General Jackpot among its prosperous citizens; so wishing them all good luck, we write—

THE END.

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healthy fer me. Howsumdever, we can't die but once, an' fer my part I'd jest erbout as lief die in pickle as in par'dise wi' sech as thet screechin' catamount, who war Sal Slap!"

Dick ordered the drinks, and while he touched lightly of his, he watched Old Avalanche, as the veteran sipped his beverage with great gusto.

"By ther smokin' salamanders, Dicky, thet aire jest like pourin' 'ile on troubled waters—reg'lar old dew from an Elysian field! Et strikes a slumbering and hitherto voiceless cord in my internal music-box, and brings me back to the days when Iuster git up afore daylight an' skulp an Injun, as an appetizer fer breakfast!"

"Avalanche, my brother," said General Jackpot, who presided behind the bar, and whose full-moon face reflected the ruddy glow of the peony, most particularly the nasal feature, "verily I believe that thou art going the way of the transgressor, and forgetting thy duties to thy brethern an' sistern of the Church. Verily, the backslider be more despised by thy Elder, than the reptile that stingeth."

"The Mormon church be cussed!" retorted Avalanche. "I'd give more for a swig of good old mountain dew than for the hull caboodle of Mormons. Fill up yer glass, Dicky, me boy, an' drink to ther health o' ther once main-spoke o' ther whirlin' wheel o' demolishun!"

"Thanks! one nip at a time is enough for me, so if it will be all the same, I'll drink a cigar," Dick replied.

"Kerect, old boyee! Suit yourself—but no cigars fer ther old eperdemic, when he kin git rare old red-eye fer five bits a swaller, nary time!" and the Annihilator poured out another brimming glass, and held it up before him, his eyes sparkling with appreciation. "Ye wouldn't believe it, but my stock o' energy has gone up fifty per cent. a share, an's still a-boomin'."

"Tell ye what, Dicky, my speerits feel as congenial as a coon in a hen-roost, an' by ther time I get a couple o' more o' these coffin-nails inter my interior, thar'll be a double distilled hail-storm o' destruction zephyrin' around this hyar camp, and yer old Avalanche will slide down amongst the bosom of his famerly, an' demonstrate tew Sal his views o' ther female sufferin' question! Whoop-ee! let her go, Gallagher!"

"Here goes ter ther juice, that makes one feel merry, An' pickles yer pride, an' paints yer nose cherry!"

But, alas! the veteran of many battles was not destined to add to the tint of his nasal appendage through the medium of the liquor, for there was a wild feminine screech at this juncture, and the glass was ruthlessly snatched from the Annihilator's grasp and dashed into atoms on the floor.

On turning to see what was the matter, Deadwood Dick beheld Old Avalanche being pulled along toward the street door of the room, by the hair of the head, his captor being a tall, thin, raw-boned female, whose slattern dress and ugly visage gave her the appearance of a veritable Hecate.

And Avalanche was submitting to this treatment without so much as a whimper!

"By Jove! this is too much of a good thing!" Dick cried, and sprung forward to separate the pair. As he did so, however, a man suddenly stepped in front of him and seized him by the throat!

CHAPTER III.

DEADWOOD DICK ON THE DEFENSIVE.

THIS interference had been so unexpected, that ere the Prince of Western Detectives could release himself from the grasp upon his throat, not only did Sal Slap succeed in getting her unfortunate spouse out of the bar-room, but reinforcement came to the assistance of Dick's assailant, and, in almost less time than it takes to write it, his hands were securely pinioned behind his back.

The first assailant then stepped back and surveyed his capture, with a smile of triumph.

"Aha!" he observed, "so your free-and-easy way of meddling received a sudden check, eh, my gay young friend?"

"So it seems," Dick replied, without a trace of resentment in his tone. "May I inquire what is the cause of my being made a prisoner?"

"The cause is sufficient!" the other replied. "You entered our town, without leave or license, and that alone warrants your arrest. You refused to give your name or business to my special officer, Marshal Paul Podesta, and publicly assaulted him. Now, who are you, and what do you want in Jackpot City?"

"For one thing, I'd like more civil treatment than I have received, so far!" Dick replied, nonchalantly. "Before I make known my identity I'd like to know who you are, for I am particularly reserved in choosing my associates, and don't, as a rule, mix up much with the common herd!"

This speech combined with his indomitable "cheek," caused the Mormon to stare.

For a moment, he did not answer; evidently he was trying to solve the problem of what kind of an individual he had struck.

"I am Morton Meredith, the Mormon Elder of the town!" he said, haughtily, "and I own this place, and all that appertains to it, body, substance or soul. No man is allowed here who does not adopt the Mormon faith, and conform with the rules and regulations thereof. This place is my home, my farm, my principality, purchased, paid for, and protected by law, and I have the right and power to reject, or to admit to my domain, whomsoever I may elect. Trespassers come under the hand of the law, and I have perfect right to arrest whoever I may see fit. You not having passed into this camp via the Tollgate, and received the sign to prove that you are all right, are therefore called upon to explain!" and the Saint folded his arms across his breast, and waited for an answer.

He was a tall, well-proportioned man, some forty years of age, with a round, smoothly shaven face, scintillating eyes, and glossy hair of dark-brown color. He was dressed neatly, in a black suit, wore a silk hat, no jewelry, and, taken as a whole, was a good-looking person, who evidently had been brought up not to value the power of the almighty dollar.

"Your vocabulary lacks nothing in the way of assumption and authority certainly," was the quiet rejoinder, "but, my saintly brother, excuse me if I say your language does not in the least disconcert me. I am too old a nomad to be cowed by patent thunder. Elder Brown thoroughly schooled me in regard to the sort of a hairpin I was to run afoul of here, and I am proud to say, Elder, that I'm glad to meet you. If my dukes were free I should be only too happy to grasp you by the hand!"

Meredith frowned.

"What do you mean, sir?" he growled.

"What do you know of Elder Brown?"

"I simply know him to be your superior, in Mormon authority," Dick replied, "and presume you recognize that authority. For further information, I refer you to a document you will find in the left hand breast pocket of my coat."

This nettled Meredith more than ever. Since he had risen to a position among the Latter-Day 'Saints,' and, especially, since he had held sway at Jackpot City, he had not been accustomed to such independence of manner and language as he had received from the sport detective.

Who was he? Where did he come from?

What did he know of Elder Brown, of Salt Lake City, whom Meredith hated, feared, and yet was forced to yield to, more than to any other man on earth.

These were the questions Jackpot City's magistrate asked himself, as he stood glaring at the cool, indifferent prisoner, whom he already detested.

"Bah!" he retorted, derisively; "you are a scoundrel and an impostor!"

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating!" was Dick's calm rejoinder. "If you doubt it, devour the document I have referred to—which is sealed—and I know not its contents—and very likely you will learn more than my innate modesty permits me to publicly tell you!"

"Very well," Meredith replied, struggling hard to suppress an outburst of anger. "We will see who, and what you are. If you are an impostor, you had better never have set foot in Jackpot City!"

He stepped forward, and, inserting his hand into the left-hand, inside pocket of Dick's coat, withdrew a sealed letter, which he at once opened and perused.

It ran as follows:

"SALT LAKE CITY, May —, 188—.

"MR. MEREDITH:—

"MY DEAR SIR:—Although we are, privately, enemies, I consider it my duty to give you due notice that you must adopt new methods of protection and precaution, as your downfall would be a downfall to the interests of the Church. Let me therefore enjoin on you the utmost secrecy and watchfulness. There are thousands of men, who, did they know not only of the wealth of your place but of your being there, would descend upon it in a cloud, and your present sway would be forever lost, and your life, also!

"Your guard is insufficient, and unless placed in

the charge of the proper party, the doom of Jackpot City is sealed. The existence of the place is daily becoming more and more known to outsiders, and only instant readiness to repulse intrusion, in case of emergency, will save the place from falling back into the hands of the Gentiles.

"A— for yourself, you need even more protection. Your affairs at C— are not lessening in magnitude, as they age, and you know what fate awaits you, if you fall into the clutches of the law.

"I have sent this by a man whom you can implicitly trust. He was formerly a U. S. Government Detective, but is now under a cloud—a fugitive from justice—and will prove a useful ally to you. He is clear-headed, cool and fearless, a born general over men, a keen manager, and a power in himself. He is a student of character, and allows no petty scruples to interfere with work he has to do.

"Therefore, I recommend you to make him chief of guard, and if there is any trouble, he is the man you can rely upon to suppress it.

"You and I are still enemies, Morton Meredith, and I will not seek my vengeance until the fatal anniversary of your devilish deed. Until then, we are brother Mormons, and my duty to the Church commands me to indite you this letter, which, having passed the approval of the senior bishop, I hereby direct you to carefully consider, and act accordingly.

"Yours in the Church,

"ELDER JOS. BROWN."

After the first perusal, Meredith read the letter over again, before speaking.

"Humph!" he growled, after the second reading, "this letter is a forgery. You did not receive it from Brown at all, or if you did, he's undergone a great change. It's my opinion you're a sneaking spy, come here to pry into my affairs."

"Sorry you've got such a bad opinion of me," Dick replied, "and I hope you'll shake it off. If you doubt my being what I'm represented, or think the letter is spurious, why don't you communicate your suspicions to Elder Brown, and have him set your mind at rest?"

"That's precisely what I propose to do. I shall dispatch a messenger at once to Salt Lake City, and on his return, if he does not bring back a favorable report, direct from the Elder's own lips, I will have you shot. Until then you are welcome to such hospitality as you may find here, but bear this in mind: you will be watched, and if you make any attempt to leave Jackpot City you will be shot down like a dog. Here, Podesta, release the prisoner's hands."

Podesta, with one eye swollen shut and discolored, shuffled forward, and in a twinkling the detective was at liberty.

Meredith turned then and quitted the hotel, while, not desiring further publicity for the present, Deadwood Dick had a room assigned him by Old Jackpot, and retired to it, preparatory to a good night's rest.

For there was no telling what the day might bring forth.

CHAPTER IV.

DEADWOOD DICK MAKES A FEW INQUIRIES.

DEADWOOD DICK was early astir the next morning, and found General Jackpot just opening up for business.

"Ah, good-morning, young man!" the General saluted, rubbing his hands together blandly. "You are an early riser, I see. Perhaps it is for the same reason that I am such. The old General allus has to have an eye-opener before breakfast, and as he has so far forgot himself as to not yet imbibe, will you jine us?"

"With pleasure," Dick replied, knowing a refusal would be considered an offense. "If you've any wine I'll sample that."

"Wine I have, what woos the wits into wisdom," the General assured, oratorically. "By the way, my friend, are you of the Mormon faith invested?"

"In a horn!" Dick replied, betraying his disgust.

"But, then, how came Meredith to let you go?"

"Oh, he had a reason to! Are you a Mormon?"

"God forbid!" the General exclaimed, as he poured out his liquor and tossed it off at a gulp. "But fer the cussed galoots, me an' my pardners would still own these mines. But wait, me boy! There'll be a change afore long, and we'll sweep these brutes off'en the face o' the earth, sure's my name's General Jackpot! We're all organized fer revolt, and it's only a question of time, till we get a little stronger, when thar'll be an insurrection, and then we'll retake the mines."

"Good! I admire that resolution, and if I am around when the revolt takes place, you can count on me to lend a helping hand. For the present, I am playing a little game of my own, and, for reasons best known to myself, shall, if

the frowning, towering mountains, with their snow clad peaks, and, in front, by a noisy, rapid river that rushes madly toward the south, is, or was until lately, the little town of Jackpot City.

The peninsula alluded to, comprises a trifle less than five hundred acres, and except for the bed of the furious stream, is the only foot of level land in the whole length of Echo Canyon, for above and below the peninsula, the torrent, which is most generally known to the trappers of the Humboldt as Cyclone Creek, on account of its swiftness and rumbling noise, occupies the entire bottom of the canyon, there being not so much as a footpath along its course.

A queer place for a town, the reader will say. And the question will naturally arise, "If the upper and lower canyon is entirely submerged with an irresistible torrent of water, how could Jackpot City be reached?"—for no human being could hope to scale the lofty mountains that arose sharply from the peninsula, until their peaks seemingly touched the clouds.

Yet, there was a way of reaching Echo Canyon without wading up or down-stream, a feat impossible to accomplish, owing to the rapidity of the current.

Standing on the peninsula point with your back to the seething waters, you gazed at the somber wall of rock that rose facing you. At first you saw naught but the wall itself, and the scattered habitations, on either side of the range of your vision. You gradually advance on a direct line, and it is not until you are within a hundred yards of the frowning barrier that you discover a fissure in the mountain-side.

This fissure, when you reach its mouth, proves to be not more than ten feet wide, and extends upward through the solid rock as far as the eye can reach. Evidently, in some remote age, an earthquake must have rent the mountain apart, thus forming this narrow defile, which, after leaving Jackpot City, worms its way through the forest-clad mountains, gradually widening as it finally debouches into the foot-hills of the eastern slope of the range near the Utah line.

In all Nevada, there is no wilder, grander scenery than that found in the stupendous Humboldt Hills, and the defile just described passes through the most weird of this scenery, and for years has been known to the rangers and prospectors as Purgatory Pass.*

The bottom of the pass, into which sunshine never penetrates more than half an hour *per diem*, is quite smooth and free from obstruction; consequently a wagon can traverse its entire length.

Midway between Jackpot City and the eastern terminus, a transverse gulch crosses Purgatory Pass, and at this point was a habitation—a cabin built of a double thickness of logs, with powerful oaken door, and roofed with thick slabs of shale stone. The windows, too, were higher than a man's head, and protected by iron bars.

The builder had evidently taken the precaution to provide himself well against the siege of an enemy.

The cabin itself backed against one wall of Purgatory Pass; while, extending from it clear across the pass, was a massive, iron-bound gate.

When this gate was closed and locked, further progress via Purgatory Pass, in either direction, was prevented.

On top of the gate was a neatly painted sign, containing the following information for the benefit of travelers. On the Eastern side of the board, for the information of people bound for Jackpot was this:

"GOV'T TOLLGATE.

NOTICE!

THIS WAY TO JACKPOT CITY!

Toll per Man.....Twenty-five cents.
" " Horse.....Ten "
DEADSHOT DAVE, Clerk."

On the Western side of the sign, for the benefit of persons Eastward-bound, this:

"GOV'T TOLLGATE.

THIS WAY TO UTAH TERRITORY LINE, AND POINTS NORTH AND SOUTH!

Toll per Man.....Ten cents.
" " Horse.....Five "
DEADSHOT DAVE, Clerk."

It thus appeared, that a larger toll was exacted for Western-bound traffic than for Eastern-bound.

The cabin was a large, roomy affair, and its single door opened on the eastern side of the big gate.

*The name originated from a superstition that whoever entered the pass from the east, and followed it to its terminus, never returned to the outer world.

Over the door hung another sign, creaking dismally in the stiff breeze that ever sucked through Purgatory Pass.

This sign contained the following bill of particulars:

BAR!

Common Bug-Juice.....Twenty-five cents.
XXX Tickler, per Three Fingers.....Forty "
Ten Year Old Red-Eye.....Fifty "
Tobacco a Plug.....Twenty-five "

As a rule, the door of the toll-house was never open, except in midsummer, and any one who came along, and wanted to pass through the gate, had to exercise his vocal powers by "halloaing," before any one appeared to wait on him or her, as the case might be.

Such was Purgatory Pass, at a casual glance. Returning to Jackpot City, we are in a little frontier village, composed of perhaps a hundred habitations, half a dozen business places, such as stores, saloons, and gaming-rooms, an ore mill, in full blast, and, last but not least, the big barn-like structure, with its broad piazza, known as the Jackpot Inn.

The existence of Jackpot City, with its thousand and odd population, originated somewhat as follows.

During the summer months of the year preceding our story, which opens in the budding spring of 188—, three men prospecting for ore in the Humboldt Mountains, met by chance one noonday, at the forks of the two mountain defiles, where afterward stood the Tollgate already described.

Two of the trio were veterans of the mining and Indian times of over three decades before, while the third, a man of forty, was much the youngest of the party.

All proved to be "hail-fellows-well-met," however—nomads of the frontier, who never had been or would be content to lead any other sort of life than that which they now pursued and enjoyed. Consequently, after they had broken fast together, and lit their pipes, it was proposed that, so long as they remained in the Humboldt Range, they should join issues as partners; for the better they became acquainted, it was developed that neither had met with any success while prospecting in the mountains, and it was thought that the consolidation of interests might affect a change of luck for the better.

So the partnership was entered into, harmoniously, and the partners thereto seemed well matched.

The elder of the trio was "General" Jackson Potts, a veteran of the feverish mining days of California and Pike's Peak—a gray-whiskered, totally bald old chap, with plenty of life, strength and spirit, despite his eight-and-sixty years—a genial, big-hearted fellow, who was full of reminiscences of by-gone days, and who was as fond of a good story, a joke, or three fingers of rye as the next one.

Just how he acquired the prefix "General" is not apparent, nor did the "General" gratify the curiosity of those who took the pains to inquire into the matter.

Suffice to say that he was dubbed "General," whether he had ever been commissioned or no, and, true to Western ways, his name had been abbreviated, and instead of Jackson Potts, he was christened by his pals General Jackpot.

Next in point of age to the General, was a little, shriveled-up old man, who was, nevertheless, possessed of prodigious strength and panther-like agility, and was an unerring rifle and revolver-shot, and a dangerous individual to get into a scrimmage with.

There was little flesh upon his frame, but what there was was hard as gristle. His shaggy hair and beard were liberally streaked with gray, and his face bore the scars of many a battle; but his eyes were as keen as a hawk's, and sparkled with the animation and brilliancy of youth.

Ears he had none, they having been shorn off close to his head, years before our story.

This famous character needs no further introduction to the readers of BEADLE'S HALF-DIME LIBRARY, where he is already known as Old Avalanche, the Only Original Great Injun Annihilator.

The third person, John Prince, was a good-looking, able-bodied man, in the prime of life, and a genial companion. He was gentlemanly, well-educated, more polished in his manners than his two companions (albeit General Jackpot carried considerable "sugar" about his clothes, which he had saved up in bygone days), and quite particular about his personal appearance.

His companions drew from him that he had

seen better days, having, until a couple of years previous, been successfully engaged in the brokerage business in Carson City. He was ruined, however, by his partner's absconding with the entire assets of the firm, and he was thrown upon the world, penniless, with nothing left to do but start out and begin life anew.

This much Prince's two partners learned, and no more, for he was not a man who was particularly communicative regarding himself or his past.

After the firm of Jackpot, Avalanche and Prince was organized, and vows of fidelity sealed over a pint-flask of "bug-juice," a resolution was passed to penetrate Purgatory Pass to its western terminus, something that, it was believed, had then never been accomplished.

So equipping themselves with meat, a plenty of which was abundant in the mountains, the trio set out on their journey.

As a result, after a longer tramp than was anticipated, they at length reached the peninsula, in Echo Canyon, where afterward Jackpot City sprang into existence.

To the great elation of the three prospectors, they found the Mecca of their fondest hopes; they had discovered a new Eldorado, in the almost impenetrable fastnesses of the mountains literally locked out from the world at large.

Not only was the soil of the peninsula itself richly impregnated with "drift" or "wash" dirt, but there were plenteous out-croppings of "sign" rock, in the towering mountain-side.

So extravagant were the promises Nature held forth to these pioneers of Jackpot City, of the wealth that lay there at their disposal, that they grew hilariously jubilant, and were afflicted with the most radical type of gold-fever.

At first, it was decided to keep their discovery a secret from the outside world, as long as possible, and work the mines on their own account, but this resolution soon fell through.

"It's a pretty sure thing to bet on," that the more money one makes, the more he wants to make, and so it was with the Jackpot Three.

Although they took out an average of twenty dollars a day each, from the peninsular dirt, they were greedy for more, and foresaw that by hiring an extra force their receipts would be proportionately increased, and it would not require so long a time to fill their coffers to overflowing.

Consequently it was decided to introduce a dozen trustworthy and able-bodied men into the mines, who would be paid extra wages, to work for the company's interests but none were to be employed who did not have families, and who were not sober, and industrious.

With this extra force the peninsula could be profitably worked, until winter set in, and then a drift could be sunk into the mountain, a fine vein of ore having already been disclosed.

General Jackpot was commissioned to select the parties wanted, while Prince was to go to the nearest point for purchasing supplies, and fetch back enough canvas to build temporary abodes for all hands.

Old Avalanche was to remain behind, and do guard duty.

General Jackpot and John Prince left Echo Canyon on the same day, the former going to Salt Lake City, and the latter to Carson City Nev.

Before leaving the mines, Jackpot had, unbeknown to the others, discovered a valuable nugget, and this he took with him.

Weeks passed by, and during this time Old Avalanche divided his time between working the claim and making himself a cabin, partly of stone and partly of logs.

John Prince was the first to return, and with him he brought a big prairie "schooner," drawn by six horses, canvas enough for twenty tents, a collection of mining implements and other tools, a stock of blasting-powder and ammunition, a portable steam-engine, boiler and saw-mill, and, last but not least, his son, Tom, a strapping young man of seventeen, his daughter, Nellie, a pretty young lady one year her brother's senior, and a niece, named Pearl Prince, an orphan, by the way, and rather prepossessing. She was about twenty-three.

Tom Prince was a practical engineer, a Jack-of-all-trades, and just the man who would make a valuable addition to the town of Jackpot City.

The General returned from Utah one week after the arrival of John Prince, accompanied by fifteen able-bodied men, who were only too glad to get work at the stipulated price of three dollars per day, and a shelter for themselves and families. Each man had a wife, but no children, while ten of the fifteen were half-breeds, but, evidently, peacefully disposed.

things work right, appear to be Elder Meredith's right-hand man and ally, while in reality I am working dead against him. Understand the racket?"

"Hum! yes, partly. I've heard my pard, Old Avalanche, speak of you frequently. You are a detective?"

"Yes; but mum's the word as regards that. I am here on an important mission, and while working out my own case, can be of service to your cause in a quiet way."

"Jes' so—jes' so! An' right glad we shall be to have you on our side!" the General declared; "for both me an' my friend Avalanche ain't quite up to the fightin' standard we once war, especially sence we war forced to hitch up in double harness. Lordy! tho', my woman's a queen to the old catamount Alva's got."

"Probably. From what I saw last night, my old friend has a hard lot of it. Where does Avalanche live?"

"In a cabin, down yonder on the south edge o' the perkins'ler; but ef you know when you're well off, you will not go pokin' round thar, fer you'll allus find the old woman 'at home,' in high tantrum, and her reception committee consists of a pair of forty-four caliber 'barkers' which she knows how to use with effect. So, if you are hankerin' to get filled full of solder, you better go down and call on Sal. If she don't make it interesting for you, I'll keep free bar fer the hull town from now till closin'-up time to-night."

"Well, if that's the case, I hardly think I shall venture to intrude upon the charming matron!" Dick declared, shrugging his shoulders. "I'd like to have a longer talk with Avalanche, however, as no doubt he could give me points that I wish to know."

"Well, if that's the case, you're likely to have to wait awhile!" the General chuckled, "for, ten to one, the Annihilator will be under an eclipse, for a week to come. If ther inquiries ye have to make concern this hyer town, I reckon I kin post you purty nigh as well as ther next one."

"Very well. You're the individual I want to see. One part of my mission in Jackpot City is to find a missing man. The case is this: Over a month ago, I sent a detective partner of mine into the Humboldt Mountains, in this immediate vicinity, to hunt up a man to whom an important secret was to be committed. My partner was to communicate with me as often as possible, but, having heard nothing of him, or of the result of his search, up to two weeks ago, I set out in search of him, myself, and after scouring the mountains hereabouts, I finally struck this town. But, after getting a look at most of the citizens, I have failed to find my partner, and fear that some harm has befallen him!"

"What fer name did yer partner bear?"

"Joseph Sands!"

"Sands, eh?" and the General rubbed the bald surface of his cranium, until it assumed nearly as roseate a tint as the end of his nose. "Sands, hey? Yes, I allow I've seen him. Short, stocky sort of a galoot, hey?"

"Exactly!"

"Rather good-lookin', wi' a blonde mustache, and mighty keen eyes!"

"Yes! yes! that's the man. Where is he?"

"Gone where the woodbine twineth, my friend, I reckon. Thar was sech a feller floated into this camp, about a fortnight ago, an' got into some trouble wi' Meredith. I don't know the hull circumstances o' the case, but I've heern tell that he didn't get out o' camp alive!"

"Do you mean to say that he was foully dealt with?" demanded Dick in evident excitement.

"Dunno what else ye kin make out o' et. I know he disappeared mighty suddint, an' Deadshot Dave has told me that he didn't leave ther town by ther way of Purgatory Pass."

"Who is Deadshot Dave?"

"He keeps ther Tollgate, up ther pass."

"Ah! I see!" and Deadwood Dick paced to and fro, in front of the bar, in perplexity. "By Heaven! if this double-dyed scoundrel, Meredith, has caused the death of poor Sands, this town is doomed, and he with it. Not an accursed Mormon shall escape!"

"Bully for you!" cried the General, enthusiastically. "That's the way to talk it! You sail in an' start the ball a-rollin', an' ye can bet every Gentile in the camp will be with ye, tooth, Thomashawk, and toe-nail!"

Richard made no answer for a few moments, then, he asked, abruptly.

"Did Sands tell you, or have you heard any one say, what was his mission, in Jackpot City?"

"No, I only saw him once, and afterward heard he and Meredith had had a quarrel, and that Sands would not be likely to pick up any more quarrels around this hyer camp. It ain't a healthy job to go nosin' around into Mormon affairs, an' so I war content to accept what little I heerd as a conclusion that your pard had been done for by the Danites!"

"The Danites?"

"Yes—Paul Podesta and his gang. When there's any dirty work Meredith wants done, they're the chaps as does it, it is said."

"How many are there of 'em?"

"That's more'n I kin tell you, for the rest of 'em is unknown, except Podesta, and even he professes to know nothing of the existence of such a gang. We Gentiles know better, and it's only keeping our mouths shut and conforming to Meredith's tyrant rules that keeps us from the unpleasant sensation of waking up some morning to find ourselves corpses."

"Humph! I see. But this sort of business won't last long. When I get things working right I'll make short work of Morton Meredith and his infamous Mormon rule. Now, dropping Sands out of the case, and granting that he has been foully dealt with, I want to ask you if there is, or has been, previous to my arrival, such a man in Jackpot City as John Prince?"

"John Prince? Great humped-up hornets, I should say thar war! Why, et war me, General George Washington Potts, together wi' John Prince an' Old Avalanche, who first discovered ther auriferous in this hyer canyon."

"Indeed? Then I am on the right trail," Dick said. "It was to hunt up this man, Prince, that I sent my partner into the Humboldt Mountains. Where will I find him—I mean John Prince?"

"I reckon you won't find him at all for the present," the General replied, grimly, "or if you do, you'll run the risk o' gettin' riddled wi' bullets a-doin' it!"

The General then went on, and detailed how, by Meredith's orders, all the Gentiles except John Prince had been forced to take unto themselves Mormon wives, and how Prince had been shut up in a secret dungeon, somewhere in the bowels of the mountains, there to remain for fourteen days without food or water, all because he refused to accept the fate of his comrades.

"Where is this dungeon?" Dick demanded, when the General had finished.

"The Lord only knows!" the General groaned. "The boys have tried to locate it, but have made an ignominious failure, and, as near as they can learn, Meredith and his tool, Podesta, are the only two who know where the dungeon is."

"I'll bet I'll know," Dick asserted, "before I am in Jackpot City many hours longer. How long has John Prince been imprisoned, thus far?"

This is the tenth day. Poor fellow, I reckon he's turned up his toes, long ere this. I allow no man could live that long, without food or drink."

"It would seem not. Yet I have heard of instances where people lived many days more than that. John Prince had a daughter, had he not?"

"Yes."

"What became of her?"

"She lives down yonder, on the furthest point of the peninsula, in the little cottage. Poor thing! she nearly cries her pretty eyes out, all on account of her father's being shut up."

At this juncture a number of roughly dressed laborers entered the bar-room, and so conversation for the time being was at an end.

CHAPTER V.

MISS PRINCE.

DURING the daytime, especially working hours, Jackpot City was about the quietest town one could imagine, all the male population, with the exception of a handful of tradesmen and saloon-keepers, being at work in the big drift that was driven into the mountain-side; and which was yielding so much rich ore, that placer mining on the peninsula was abandoned.

After breakfast, Dick sauntered forth for a stroll.

The northern portion of the peninsula was timbered with majestic pines and cottonwoods, and afforded a shady retreat, and having nothing in particular to occupy his attention, until later in the day, Bristol wandered toward the woods, and later threaded its leafy aisles.

Away ahead, through the timber, the roar of the turbulent waters of Cyclone Creek could be heard, as they lashed themselves into a fury against the rock-ribbed shores in a vain effort

to cut across the neck of land, and then with a sullen rush had to turn aside, and sweep angrily around the peninsula's point.

But neither the caroling of the winged songsters overhead nor the hubbub of the waters, seemed to be noticed by the Wild West Detective, as he wandered among the trees in deep thought.

For an hour he paced to and fro, and then paused to light a cigar and look at his watch.

As he did so, he caught sight of something lying on the ground before him, and on stooping to pick it up, he was astonished to find it was a chamois purse, prettily trimmed with various colored beads, the latter being also arranged into the letters

"NELLIE P."

Examination proved that this little receptacle contained a sum of money in greenbacks, but just how much, Dick did not take the trouble to count.

"Queer place to find a purse!" he mused. "I wonder where the owner is. Nellie P.—? Let me think. Ah! I have it—Nellie Prince, John Prince's daughter! By Jove! it is fortunate I found this, for now I have a good excuse for calling on the young lady."

Putting the purse in his pocket, he left the forest, and made his way toward the point of land where stood the Prince cottage, which was one of the cosiest in Jackpot City, inasmuch as vines had been trained up over the door-arbor and windows, and flower-beds were arranged on either side of the graveled walk.

The front door stood partly ajar as Deadwood Dick approached, and as he came up it was opened by the person whom the detective concluded must be Nellie Prince, for he was unaware that John Prince's niece was a member of his family.

The young woman he now beheld, was tall and of sylph-like build, with rather strong cast of features, a pearly complexion, dark, liquid eyes, and raven hair, with which great care had been taken, evidently, to becomingly arrange.

She was in a flowing wrapper of pink percale, with a bunch of wood-lilies at her fair throat, and was certainly a picture of rare beauty, such as is not frequently met with in the wild regions of the West.

"Have I the honor of addressing Miss Nellie Prince?" Dick asked, cavalierly raising his hat.

The young woman hesitated a second, while her gaze swept the detective from head to foot.

"Yes, I am Miss Prince," she finally answered.

"What is it you wish?"

"If you will pardon me, I will introduce myself. My name is Bristol, and I am commissioned to see your estimable father on an important business matter. Learning that Mr. Prince is not to be seen at present, I concluded it would be appropriate to call upon his daughter."

"Certainly. You did quite right. Pray come inside."

And Dick was ushered into a plain little sitting-room and given a chair.

"Were you acquainted with papa, Mr. Bristol?" Miss Prince asked, when they were seated.

"I was not," Dick replied. "Chancing to visit Carson City a few weeks ago, I was engaged to hunt up your father, as soon as it became known that I was a detective."

"A detective?" and Miss Prince began to look ill at ease.

"Yes, miss; but pray do not be alarmed, because my motive in finding your father is not an unfriendly one. I have come as a friend, and as such I trust you will accept me. Your father was formerly in business in Carson, I believe?"

"Yes, sir. He was engaged in the brokerage business, in company with a man named Henry Kirke."

"Mr. Prince was quite wealthy, I understand?"

"Yes, sir. I think he had many thousand dollars in the business; but he lost it all, through the base treachery of his partner, who absconded with the entire assets of the firm."

"How old a man was this Henry Kirke?"

"Over sixty years of age."

"Do you know where he went after he fled from Carson City?"

"I do not. I have heard he was afterward seen in Utah."

"He had two nephews, I believe?"

"Yes, sir—a Mr. Morton Meredith, who is the present Mormon ruler of this camp, and another nephew named Lloyd Meredith. The latter, however, was at swords' points with Kirke and Morton Meredith, and consequently changed his own name for the commoner one of Joe Sands."

"Now, which way?" Davis demanded, as they emerged upon the peninsula.

"To the mouth of the Purgatory Pass."

"Lead on, and bear in mind your life hinges on your good behavior."

Dick made no reply, but led off, and Davis brought up the rear, revolver in hand.

It was an odd little procession, the twain made, as they wended their way across the neck of land, toward the mouth of the dismal pass.

It required but a couple of minutes' walk to reach the mouth of the pass, and there Dick came to a halt, and appeared to be peering searchingly around him.

"Well, what's the matter, now?" growled Davis. "Is the money concealed here? If it is, produce it instant, or I'll blow your head off!"

"Don't get in a sweat!" Dick responded. "I'm tryin' to make out the exact spot—"

"Drop that 'pop!'"

The order came suddenly, and in fierce tones, and, with a cry of alarm, Davis wheeled to find himself confronted by the towering figure of Deadshot Dave, and to find himself "covered" by a revolver even more wicked-looking than his own.

"Drop that gun, I say!" again ordered the half-breed, gruffly, and this time Davis obeyed, for the suddenness of the turning of the tables had completely unnerved him, and he trembled with abject terror.

"Now, pardner," said Dave, "if you'll adorn this cuss with a pair o' bracelets, I reckon we won't have any more trouble with him."

"The bracelets shall the worthy Isaac have!" Dick replied, handcuffing the prisoner.

"But, this him happens to be a her!"

"The devil you say!"

"Well, no, not exactly the devil, but one of his fair satellites. Allow me, Mister Davis," and reaching forward, Dick first removed the slouch hat, then the false beard and hair of the disguised schemer, and Pearl Prince stood before them, unmasked.

"Curse you! curse you!" she cried. "If I ever get fee, I'll murder you both," she screamed, fairly furious over her defeat.

"Oh, no doubt you would like to!" Dick replied, "but, as you have done quite enough mischief for one while, I reckon we shall be in duty bound to put a temporary check on your progress down-hill. You've played a good hand in the game, only you discarded wrong. In future, never think a jack will be worth playing, when kings are high against you."

For the next few minutes the young woman indulged in language more forcible than polite; then she went into hysterics, after which she capped the climax by fainting dead away.

Leaving her in charge of Dave, with instructions to take her to the Tollgate as soon as she recovered consciousness, Dick returned to Jackpot, taking with him the bundle of muslin on which was his proclamation.

Ere day had fairly dawned, this bulletin was posted in a conspicuous place, on the end of an empty shanty, for the edification of the early and late risers of the little mountain town.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE KNOT THAT WAS NEVER TIED.

WHEN the people of Jackpot came forth, and, one after another read Deadwood Dick's Decree, there was no end to excitement and consternation.

The men swore, roved about and drank whisky, and the women sniveled and gossiped, and forgot to get breakfast.

The prospect of being driven from their new homes was anything but pleasing.

The majority of the weaker sex were confirmed adherents of Mormonism, and a goodly number of the men declared their intention of showing fight, in case there was an invasion of Gentiles.

As soon as he heard of the commotion, Morton Meredith took a look at the bulletin. Evidently it did not impress him agreeably, for his face grew pale, and a hunted look entered his eyes.

"That accursed hound, Bristol, has done this," he growled, "and that proves Nellie's statement that this camp will be invaded. Well, let them come. The invasion is not to take place until Friday, and ere Friday dawns I shall be out of this camp."

No attempt was made to work the mines that day, and the single little street swarmed with excited people all day.

There was a noticeable division of the classes, too.

The Mormons, who were for retaining possession of the camp, and fighting it out on that line, largely predominated, but lacked male strength.

The class who voted to remain, subject to Gentile government, had the majority of able-bodied men, and few women on their side.

Paul Podesta was about the only man who was, so to speak, "astraddle the fence."

The failure of Pearl Prince's mad scheme was not unknown to him, for he had secretly witnessed her capture, and knew that there was no promise of getting hold of the Kirke fortune, so far as she was concerned.

Which party to lend his services to he did not quite know, for he was ambitious to be on the winning side, and was uncertain which side that would be. Much depended on the numbers the invasion brought.

But make money out of the trouble he meant to do, come what might, and he knew of no source more likely to yield a good revenue than in "working" Morton Meredith.

So to Meredith's cottage he betook himself, and found the elder at home in a particularly disagreeable humor.

"Well, what d'ye want?" he demanded, when the Danite entered. "I didn't send for you."

"Who said you did?" was the cool reply.

"What do you want?"

"Oh! I thought I'd drop in and have a settlement with you."

"A settlement? What do you mean? I don't owe you anything."

"Don't you? Waal, I ruther reckon you do. What's more, you have got to settle, or you'll find yourself in hot water. I want a couple of thousand dollars. When I want a thing, I want it bad, as you'll find out."

"You'll get no such sum of money from me. I owe you nothing, so I'll not give you a cent."

"Oh! won't you? Then we'll take it from you."

"We? What do you mean?"

"By we I mean myself, and those who have until now been your faithful followers. They do not know of your intention to skip the town and leave them in the lurch, but when I tell them, they'll know it, you bet! And takin' into consideration the fact that they're all bilin' mad on account o' the bulletin, it won't take much to sic 'em onto you. So, if you want 'em to make it pleasant for you, why, all you've got to do is to say the word."

"So that's your game, is it? Well, it won't work. I have no intention of leaving Jackpot City."

"Bah! Tell that to the marines! I know your plans just as well as you know them yourself. You can't afford to be on the outs with me, providing you hope to keep out of prison. By being liberal with me, I can help you to escape from the camp, after you marry the girl, and reach a place of safety. Be stingy with me, and I'll bet my horse ag'in' a chaw of tobacco that you don't get out of Echo Canyon alive."

"Who told you I was going to be married?"

"That don't matter. I know it, and I ain't the only one, either. The fact is, you're hemmed in on all sides, and only by dealing with me is there any hope of your saving your neck. If the Mormons hear of your proposed flight, it will so infuriate them that they will pounce upon you and rend you limb from limb, and just so sure as you refuse to come to my terms, just so sure will I set them on you. You sabb?"

"Curse you!" Meredith hissed, as he arose and paced the floor. "Curse you! I've a mind to murder you!"

"Oh, dry up on that gab! I can kill a dozen bunglers like you, while you're killing one."

Meredith evidently did not doubt this. Anyhow, his demeanor changed and he said:

"Well, I suppose there's no use of making matters any worse than they are. So if two thousand dollars will buy you over to my side, why the money is yours."

"Fork it over, then, and I'll stand by you, through thick and thin!"

Meredith arose and went toward his big safe, but, instead of attempting to open it, he suddenly wheeled, with a revolver in his grasp!

"You will try to bleed me for money will ye?" he cried, vengefully. "Well, I'll endeavor to show you how you'll succeed. Take that, you dog!"

And leveling his revolver full at the Danite, he fired, once, twice, thrice.

Each bullet hit a vital spot, and, without so much as a groan, Podesta tumbled from his chair to the floor, stone dead.

"Another red crime to answer for!" the murderer gasped, as he gazed at his awful work. "Ugh! But, why should I care? If they will come and hound me, their doom be on their own heads!"

Seizing the murdered ruffian by the feet, he

dragged the body into a rear room and raising a trap in the floor, tumbled the dead wretch down into a foul-smelling place. Then the trap was closed and firmly nailed down.

That night the red-handed Elder of Jackpot City removed, bag and baggage, to the Inn, and his cottage was closed and locked, probably never again to be tenanted by its owner.

Though he was missed, no one seemed to entertain a suspicion that Paul Podesta was false to the Mormon side, but all concluded that he had been frightened at Deadwood Dick's Decree, and had left the camp.

Hours rolled into days, and at last, Thursday came, finding no particular change in the situation of affairs at Jackpot City.

The citizens who proposed to remain under the promised new government, all wore the red ribbons of allegiance; while the faction who proposed to fight against invasion had taken possession of the ore-mill, and grimly declared their intention of "holding the fort," to the last.

They were well supplied with weapons and ammunition, and, as they were thoroughly in earnest as good Saints, it looked as if they might give a pretty tough battle.

Old Avalanche had secured Sal Samantha's consent to act as general over the Gentile faction, so he was once more in his glory, and he gave his subjects a drill, twice daily.

Meredith kept himself housed at the hotel, most of the time. Between doubt and fear in regard to how matters were to end, he grew pale and nervous, and spent his money freely, for drink.

He paid one visit to Nellie Prince, Thursday morning, to satisfy a gnawing suspicion in his mind whether or not she intended to play him false; but, as there was no apparent change in her demeanor, he went away feeling reassured that all would turn out right. Nothing more was there to do, he was told, but present himself at the Avalanche cottage at eleven o'clock that night, bringing with him his two victims of imprisonment, John Prince and Joe Sands, Deadwood Dick's former pard.

As for Dick, he was not seen in the camp in the interim between Monday and Thursday, although he came down a couple of times from the Tollgate on the sly, and consulted with Nellie and the Lanches.

The parson from Lawson's Ranch arrived Thursday afternoon, and took up his quarters at the Lanche home, where he was met by Dick and acquainted with the part he was to play in the little drama that was to be enacted.

At first he objected, on the ground that it was deception, and, consequently, a sin; but, when he learned what a murderous wretch Meredith was, he changed his mind, pocketed a twenty-dollar "ducat," and consented to perform the sham ceremony.

The night came on with inky darkness, and a driving rain-storm; but all that was propitious for the work to be done, and neither Meredith nor Deadwood Dick were sorry for the storm.

At eleven o'clock, the little front room of Avalanche's shanty was lit up, but, as the curtains were drawn, no one on the outside would have known that any one was awake within.

Seated in the front room were Old Avalanche, Sal Samantha and the minister, waiting the arrival of the would-be bridegroom.

Presently there was a knock upon the door.

"Ha! that's him!" the Annihilator chuckled, as he arose to answer the summons. "Now, by the great ham-bone, the sarcus is about to begin!" and opening the door, he admitted three rain-drenched figures.

First came Meredith, enveloped in a great army coat, and following him were two gaunt, famished-looking men, whose pale faces told the suffering they had undergone. They were John Prince and Joe Sands.

They were very weak, and were at once given chairs.

"Well, I'm here!" Meredith announced, "to fulfill my part o' the contract, and I want to get through with the business at once. Where's the girl?"

"She'll be ready in a few minutes!" replied Sal Samantha, who had planted herself in front of a door leading to an adjoining room. "Jest be seated, Brother Meredith, and she will be ready in a jiffy!"

"Have you got the hosses ready to leave camp after the ceremony?" asked Alva.

"Yes. They're waiting outside. Do you think there will be any trouble of escaping by way of the pass?"

"Waal, I reckon not, pervidin' I go along!" the Annihilator replied. "The detective ner